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OO RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #2031/01 3551225
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 211225Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9603
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002031

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DEPT FOR AF/SPG, S/CRS
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: MORE TO COME WITH JEM-GOS IN WEST DARFUR

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In a December 20 conversation with FieldOff, a commander of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in El Fasher assessed that Government of Sudan (GoS) frustration with JEM for a December 16 attack on a GoS convoy in West Darfur was to blame for the GoS' continued detention of a JEM leader. The JEM commander reported that Chadian rebels recently routed by President Deby in eastern Chad were in El Geneina and on the move, along with GoS troops and janjaweed militias, toward Silea, where he predicted there would be another attack in the coming days against JEM forces. As in previous conversations, the JEM rep assured FieldOff that JEM statements in the press against the Chinese contingent of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) were exaggerated, and he added they could be allayed altogether if the Chinese were to address the movements directly. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In a December 20 conversation with FieldOff, a JEM commander in El Fasher described his December 18 travel to El Geneina, West Darfur, in the wake of a JEM attack on a GoS convoy near Jebel Mun. The attack resulted in the capture by the JEM of 29 Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) soldiers, 32 vehicles and a stock of heavy weapons, as well as in the deaths of three JEM soldiers and the severe injury of two others. The JEM rep complained that the GoS had blocked his entering El Geneina on the basis that he had no clearance to travel to the area, despite his having obtained permission from the AU Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to do so. [NOTE: The JEM rep had traveled to El Geneina on a special AMIS flight, one which required express AMIS permission to go to the region. END NOTE]. Upon his return to El Fasher, the JEM complained to the AMIS Deputy Force Commander (FC), who recommended registering his complaint with Khartoum authorities, but so far no action has been taken.

¶3. (SBU) The JEM commander reported the movement of large numbers of SAF and Chadian rebel troops from El Geneina toward Silea in what he considered a precursor for a new attack against JEM positions in the coming days. He said that the troops included Chadian rebels recently routed in fighting in eastern Chad by President Deby and the Chadian National Army (ANT). The JEM rep put the count of troops moving from El Geneina at 63 Chadian rebel vehicles, 55 SAF vehicles and 23 janjaweed vehicles. The JEM rep confirmed that JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim was still in Jebel Mun ahead of the planned attacks. On the presence of Chadian rebels in El Geneina, the JEM rep noted they had suffered heavy losses against the ANT and were flooding El Geneina hospitals, filling every bed, lining the floors and even occupying space in locals' homes. Once recovered, the JEM rep expected these rebels to be re-armed and re-supplied by the GoS, used in its impending campaign against the JEM, and then returned to Chad. "If I were the Chadian Government," the JEM rep said, "I would come to El Geneina and attack, because it's now a [Chadian] rebel town."

¶4. (SBU) According to the JEM rep, another indication of the GoS' "displeasure" with the movement was in the arrest and continued detention of JEM member COL Hamad Hasan Mohamed, who was arrested in Kulbus on December 14 while allegedly traveling as part of an AU

Ceasefire Commission (CFC) delegation to the area. The JEM rep acknowledged that Hamad was not an inconspicuous target, his JEM membership notwithstanding: he was reportedly carrying \$75,000 worth of cash, computers, Thurayas and other equipment with him. Nevertheless, there has been no word of Hamad's whereabouts, despite repeated complaints from the JEM rep in El Fasher, who considers this continued detention as GoS payback for the December 16 attack. The rep added that it could also be the GoS' way of testing the AU's mettle with regard to its willingness to protect CFC members. [NOTE: The JEM insists that Hamad was in possession of his AU ID card at the time of his arrest. END NOTE].

15. (SBU) In response to FieldOff's mention of the December 17 meeting between UNAMID Joint Special Representative Adada and GoS Darfur Advisor Nafie (in which Nafie reiterated the GoS preference for dissolving the CFC Chamber for the Darfur Peace Agreement non-signatories), the JEM rep pledged that he would return to the field if such a dissolution occurred. On UNAMID deployment, the JEM rep reiterated what he had said in previous conversations: that the JEM's anti-China rhetoric was just empty words. He advised it would go a long way with the movements if the Chinese were to confront head-on allegations of collusion with the GoS, allegations shared not only by the rebel movements but by IDPs and community leaders as well. He mentioned the possibility of a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador as a first step in this "reconciliation," something also discussed in a December 19 meeting between FieldOff and AMIS Deputy FC.

16. (SBU) COMMENT. It is hard to dispute the links between the GoS military defeat in West Darfur with its current campaign against the JEM, including its detention of Hamad. It is similarly difficult to dispute the JEM's defensiveness in the face of provocative actions it has taken lately against the GoS, both on the battlefield and in the media. While JEM-GoS conflicts will no doubt continue to rise

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in the immediate future (with involvement of Chadian rebels), steps could be taken to assuage JEM-UNAMID tensions, particularly with Transfer of Authority a mere 11 days away. The idea of trying to counter propaganda against the Chinese component of UNAMID should not be discounted. A similar, if not less politically charged, "familiarization" campaign was undertaken when the Bangladeshi Formed Police Units (FPUs) first arrived in Nyala and were introduced at Kalma IDP camp. While admittedly a token gesture, such a step with the Chinese could nonetheless have a hand in silencing UNAMID naysayers among the Darfur rebel groups, help establish UNAMID credibility from the outset, and would be a positive step toward winning over those populations that UNAMID is mandated to protect. END COMMENT.

17. (SBU) Tripoli minimize considered.

POWERS